

FINAL BILL REPORT

SB 6125

C 72 L 18
Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Extending the expiration date of the department of ecology's authority to enter into voluntary regional agreements.

Sponsors: Senator Honeyford.

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks
House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources

Background: In 2006, the Legislature enacted the Columbia River Basin Water Supply Act (Act) relating to water resource management in the Columbia River Basin (Basin). A priority of this Act is the development of new water supplies that includes storage and conservation for the economic and community development needs of people, as well as the instream flow needs of fish. Water supplies that are developed and secured through projects funded from the Basin accounts must be used in specified ways. Two-thirds of this water must be dedicated to out-of-stream uses, while one-third must be used by the Department of Ecology to enhance instream flows. The one-third to two-thirds allocation of water resources between instream and out-of-stream uses does not apply to applications for changes or transfers of existing water rights in the Basin.

Ecology has the authority, which expires on June 30, 2018, to enter into voluntary regional agreements between Ecology and water users that provide for the appropriation of new water for out-of-stream use developed in the Basin. Any voluntary regional agreement must protect instream flows. Specifically, any new water appropriated under a voluntary regional agreement must not have a negative impact on seasonal instream flows in the main stem of the Columbia and Snake rivers.

Ecology must follow specific notification and consultation procedures prior to entering into a voluntary regional agreement. This process includes a consultation with county legislative authorities, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, affected tribal governments, and the federal government.

The voluntary regional agreements entered into by Ecology prior to June 30, 2018, remain in effect after June 30, 2018. However, after that date, Ecology does not have the authority to enter into additional voluntary regional agreements.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary: Ecology's authority to enter into voluntary regional agreements for the purposes of providing new water for out-of-stream use in the Basin is extended from June 30, 2018, to June 30, 2024.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate 47 0

House 97 0

Effective: June 7, 2018